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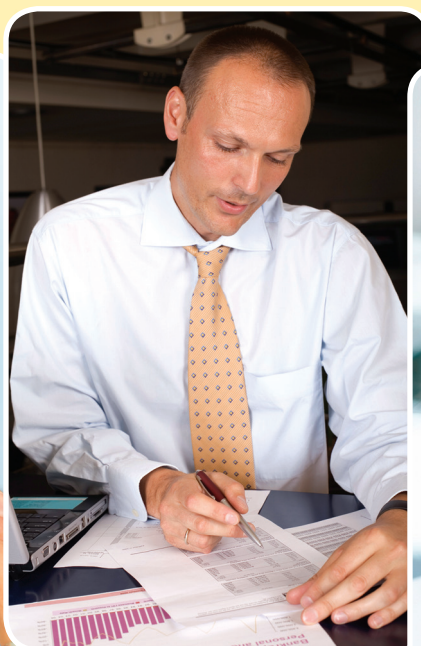
Nonverbal communication



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter you should be able to:

- Explain the difference between body language and nonverbal communication
- Explain the importance of clustering and congruence for understanding – and avoiding misunderstanding – nonverbal communication
- Use a visual model to explain different aspects of nonverbal communication such as gesture, posture, body movement, touch, eye contact, paralinguistics, environment and time



What is nonverbal communication?

Nonverbal communication can be a very powerful tool in understanding ourselves and others. Are *nonverbal communication* and *body language* the same? No, they are not. Body language involves the physical behaviour of our bodies – eye contact, posture, gesture, orientation and so forth – while nonverbal communication embraces all body language communication, and also includes clothing and adornment, environmental factors and even the manner in which we use time. Nonverbal communication concepts feature heavily in other chapters in this book.

So what does nonverbal communication do for us that verbal communication and good old-fashioned words cannot do? Dickson and Hargie (2003, p. 50) suggest that we use nonverbal communication in order to:

1. replace verbal communication in situations where it may be impossible or inappropriate to talk
2. complement verbal communication, thereby enhancing the overall message
3. modify the spoken word
4. contradict, either intentionally or unintentionally, what is said
5. regulate conversation by helping to mark speech turns
6. express emotions and interpersonal attitudes
7. negotiate relationships in respect of, for instance, dominance, control and liking
8. convey personal and social identity through such features as dress and adornments
9. contextualise interaction by creating a particular social setting.

Tell: a nonverbal behaviour that reveals a person's true state of mind

Cluster: in relation to nonverbal communication, a group of different types of nonverbal behaviours or tells.



This young businesswoman is displaying several different types of nonverbal behaviours or tells. What might her nonverbal cues suggest about her internal state of mind?

Nonverbal behaviours (e.g. a gesture or eye movements) are sometimes referred to as **tells** because they tell us about a person's true state of mind (Navarro 2008, 2011).

Nevertheless, nonverbal communication can be very ambiguous: we should not presume that we can 'read other people's minds' because of what we think they are 'saying' nonverbally. We may be right, but equally we may be wrong. To be more right than wrong, we should not seize upon one gesture or posture in isolation; rather, we need to recognise entire groups or **clusters** of nonverbal behaviour that suggest the same internal state of mind.

We should also not presume, as some do, that nonverbal communication is more important than verbal communication. It has become commonplace, for example, to hear that nonverbal communication comprises 70 to 90 per cent of our communication and that spoken words comprise only a small proportion of the totality of communication. This percentage approach is generally attributed to Mehrabian (1971), who based it on word-ambiguity experiments he conducted using US college students in the late 1960s. From this research he developed the idea that only about 7 per cent of meaning in communication could be extracted from the actual words spoken, while tone of voice accounted for about 38 per cent and body language about 55 per cent of conveyed meaning. This conjecture, based on experimental data that has often been challenged (Oestreich 1999), has wrongly been established in some minds as irrefutable fact relevant to all situations in all cultures. In some situations, of course, nonverbal communication comprises 100 per cent of the message being sent – for example, touching the hand of a grieving relative, or two

lovers gazing into each other's eyes – but in others it might comprise only 10 per cent or less. The idea of applying percentages is misguided anyway. Some specialists in nonverbal communication use the illustration of a television set with the sound turned down: we can tell what is going on they suggest, merely by observing the nonverbal behaviour. This is



Police officers are trained to interpret nonverbal cues, as well as to consider verbal feedback, in establishing the credibility of eyewitnesses and the accuracy of their testimonies.

**Face of interviewee blurred for confidentiality reasons.*

Congruence: the extent to which verbal and nonverbal messages reinforce or contradict each other

a dubious proposition: we might be able to work out, in general terms, what is happening, but we would certainly miss the specifics, and, more often than not, would get things totally wrong. An overemphasis on the previous percentages has been a useful corrective to our historical absorption in the verbal aspects of communication, but it's time the pendulum in the debate was wrenched back again.

Figure 8.1 presents a simple ten-part model of nonverbal communication.

In some respects, it is a false dichotomy to separate verbal and nonverbal communication (Jones & LeBaron 2002). Truly effective communication occurs when the two aspects are in harmony. When they are not **congruent** with each other – when, for example, a friend says 'I'm OK, really', but her mournful expression, slumped posture and teary eyes indicate otherwise – then we need to pay attention to the imbalance between the two channels of communication. Navarro (2008), for example, an FBI agent skilled in reading nonverbal communication, was interviewing a suspect in a rape case. The suspect denied involvement, saying that he had turned left and gone home, but his hand gestured to his right (he subsequently confessed). In many circumstances, therefore, it sometimes makes sense to give more credence to the nonverbal message than to the verbal message.

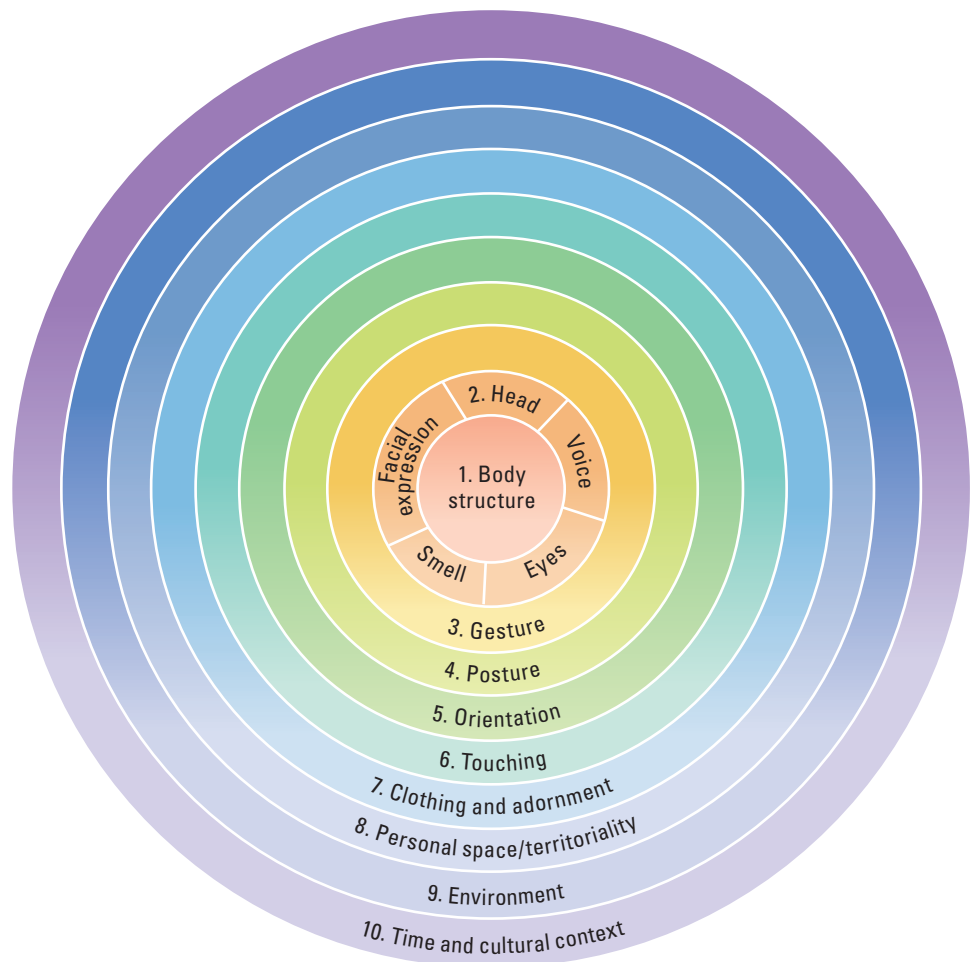


FIGURE 8.1 A model of nonverbal communication

Source: Adapted from Eunson (1987).

Body structure and deep behaviour: the medium is the message?

Some recent biological theories suggest that the body is not merely the medium used to convey meaning, but in fact may have itself been shaped by deeper forces, and that therefore much nonverbal communication can best be understood as the expression of basic biological drives. These controversial theories build on the pioneering work of Charles Darwin, who published a study in 1872 on ‘the expression of emotions in man and animals’ (Darwin 2002 [1872]).

Evolutionary psychology, for example, suggests that relatively minor characteristics such as physical attractiveness reveal deeper phenomena, with the ‘survival of the prettiest’ demonstrating that conventional physical attractiveness and symmetry (the tendency of both sides of the body and face to be balanced) may be adaptive. This implies that it is associated with physical robustness and thus more likely to lead to genetic survival and reproduction – not to mention the possibility that more ‘attractive’ people, even in a variety of human cultures, may be more likely to be successful in job hunting because of this ‘lookism phenomenon’ (Etcoff 2000; Wright 1995; Buss 2003; Geary 2004; Chiu & Babcock 2002; Warhurst, Van den Broek & Hall 2009).

Human anatomy itself may have evolved to express behavioural patterns such as aggression and sexuality. Guthrie (1976) suggests that many of the bodily characteristics we associate with dominant males – broad shoulders, wide, protuberant chin, heavy eyebrows and pronounced cheekbones – evolved to attract females (because such features suggested physical fitness and thus ability to provide and protect), and to dominate other, competing males. Certainly, the combination of these characteristics, particularly when associated with tall, heavily muscled males, can seem threatening, even in these ‘civilised’ times. Similarly, beards may have evolved not to keep the male face warm but to extend the threat potential of the chin. The ‘tingling up the spine’ felt in threatening situations may be related to the ability of proto-humans to erect hair or hackles on the shoulders, thereby creating a greater threat profile – a feature retained by many animals, including domesticated dogs and cats (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2007). Nowadays males try to enhance this dominance effect by means of shoulder padding and epaulettes on uniforms (although shoulder pads for women have come into, and gone out of, fashion in recent decades).

Bodies, biology and society

More controversially, proponents of the connection between body structure and behaviour argue that similar evolutionary dynamics may have shaped human sexual anatomy, particularly female anatomy (Morris 2002, 2005; Guthrie 1976). Proponents of this biologically deterministic view argue that when prehumans walked on all fours, males sexually penetrated females from behind. When *Homo erectus* began to walk erect, the visual sexual stimulus of the female buttocks framing the genitalia was no longer readily available to males. Thus, according to the genital echo or body self-mimicry theory (Mick and Oswald 2007), female breasts began to mimic the buttocks by becoming much larger than was necessary for their primary function (lactation and suckling of young). In some cultures, breasts, cleavage and décolletage thus took on erotic or sexually cueing functions as well as nurturing functions. This, of course, presupposes that all cultures find female breasts erotic, which is not necessarily true; see, for example, Lattier (1998). Pursuing the mimicry theory further, Guthrie and Morris argue that the reddish lips of the female (sometimes enhanced by culturally specific amplifiers such as lipstick) imitate the labia or outer sexual organs of the female.

Obviously, to the extent that these phenomena are real, they would be the result of hereditary adaptation rather than environmental, socially conditioned behaviour (Pinker 2003). In explaining gender-linked behaviour and communication, such evolutionary psychology-based ideas are described as essentialist and stand in opposition to the constructivist view, which is that much or all sexual/gender behaviour and communication is influenced or determined by social factors rather than biological factors (see online chapter ‘Gender and communication’).

Some other possible aspects of biological bases of human behaviour are outlined in table 8.1.

TABLE 8.1 Some aspects of human behaviour that may have a biological basis

Phenomenon	Possible explanation
Contrary to the myth of the wicked stepmother, many parents invest more resources (e.g. teeth braces, cars, loans, weddings and homework help) in adoptive and stepchildren than in their own genetic children. In spite of this, adoptive children are far more likely to be assaulted or killed by a nongenetic parent, and are far less likely to succeed in academic testing and wealth accumulation over their lifespan.	Adoptive parents, or step-parents, invest more resources not because they love them more but because they need more help (and possibly because parents do not want to show the child that she/he is ‘second class’). Poor life outcomes may be associated with genetic transmission from birth mothers who place or surrender their child, as such birth mothers tend to have higher incidences of addiction, mental health and domestic problems. Stepchildren may threaten the resources available to the genetic children of the step-parent. Canadian data shows that children living with step-parents are 40 times more likely to be abused and 120 times more likely to be killed by a live-in parent than those living with two genetic parents (Gibson 2008).
Dogs, when defecating, may turn around in circles, defecate and then kick dirt over their faeces.	In prehistoric times (and even today) an animal is most vulnerable to attack when defecating. Consequently, animals seek out long grass for cover, turn around in circles to create a space, and then kick dirt to cover their scent or spoor to prevent predators from tracking them (Morris 1998).
Dancers judged to be excellent also have more physically symmetrical bodies than other dancers (i.e. both halves of their bodies and faces are very similar).	Coordinated men and women hold and move their bodies in rhythmic ways, thus showing off their strong immune systems and genetic strength, while bodily and facial symmetry are associated with reproductive fitness (Fisher 2009)
Men in high-security hospitals and prisons were found to be 20 times more likely to have an XYY chromosomal pattern, as distinct from the normal XY pattern. XYY-pattern males were also said to be taller, to have lower IQs and to suffer from acne and personality disorders.	The height–chromosome correlation holds, but little else: most inmates were there for nonviolent crime and many XYY males lead normal, nonviolent lives (Rafter 2008; Malott 2007). Nevertheless, the 20 times factor remains intriguing.

(continued)

TABLE 8.1 (continued)

Phenomenon	Possible explanation
Some people seem to be able to detect when someone is staring at them, while some people claim that they can make people turn around or pets wake up just by looking at them. Some detectives are told not to look too long at the back of a person they are following, as the person may turn around and discover them. Some paparazzi and snipers claim that their targets seem to know when they are being looked at from afar.	Sheldrake (1995) suggests that animals, including humans, developed this ability through evolution in the context of predator–prey relationships: prey animals that could detect when predators were looking at them would probably stand a better chance of survival.
In Jane Austen’s novels (and indeed, in much literature and other arts), females choose male mates, rather than vice-versa. Females are often poorer than males, but are often good conversationalists.	Darwinian literary theory (e.g. Barash & Barash 2005; Austin 2011; Boyd, Carroll & Gottschall 2011) explores beyond the socioeconomic and sex-role conventions of literary works to detect evolutionary strategies, showing that Austen’s heroines are often confronted with a choice of males who have what biologists call r^3 ‘reproductively relevant resources’, which are usually wealth, health and fidelity, but also include skill in verbal repartee and mental agility — a signal of reproductive desirability.

Does this mean, therefore, that we are slaves to unconscious, evolutionary drives; that our bodies are merely machines driven by ‘selfish genes’ (Dawkins 2006) to create other bodies; that ‘love’ is merely an evolutionary trick; and that we have no free will? Not at all; rather, the more we learn about our biological programming, the more we will be in a position to go with it or challenge it — it is unconscious no more.

There is also the question of the model of reproductive sexuality we are considering here; namely the heterosexual model. What about homosexuals? Reuter (2002) argues for the existence of ‘gaydar’: a word formed from radar referring to the ability to pick up cues — many of which are nonverbal — that another person is homosexual. While the idea is popular in the gay community, the data backing it is not strong (Shelp 2002). Woolery (2007) points out that if gaydar exists, then it challenges, if not negates, the notion that ‘you can never know’ (the ‘we are everywhere’ slogan of the movement).

Head movements

Darwin (2002 [1872]) suggested that the ‘yes’ gesture (nodding the head up and down) derived from a baby moving towards the breast, while the ‘no’ gesture (moving the head side to side) derived from a baby rejecting the breast after it had drunk its fill. It may not be as simple as that, however, as we now know such nonverbal communication is often culture specific. While the positive head nod and negative head shake are commonly understood around the world, they are far from universal. In parts of Bulgaria and Greece, for example, nodding means no, while in parts of the former Yugoslavia and southern India, shaking the head signifies yes (Axtell 1998). Historically, nodding the head may be related to bowing, which was — and is — a way of showing submission to another’s will.

In conversation, when people agree with the speaker, they tend to nod as the other speaks. If a person doesn’t nod, we may deduce that he or she disagrees with the speaker. This impression will be borne out if this immobility is followed by a head shake. When

Backchanneling: in conversation, responding to a speaker with nonverbal and paraverbal feedback, such as nodding, smiling and 'friendly grunts'

we are listening effectively, we indulge in **backchanneling**; that is, we give nonverbal and paraverbal feedback by nodding, smiling and emitting 'friendly grunts' (e.g. 'Uh huh...', 'mmm...hmm...') (Kjellmer 2009).

In western cultures, individuals in conversation who wish to take over the speaking role may increase their rate of head-nods, move forward in their seats, increase the 'friendly grunts' and further 'bid' for attention with a raised hand, finger or pen. A tilted head may mean a number of things, including 'I am listening' (with thoughtful expression), 'I like you a lot' (with coy, smiling expression) or 'I am feeling angry' (with aggressive expression) (Fast 2002; Krumhuber, Manstead & Kappas 2007).

Facial expressions

The face reveals much of our emotional disposition, and there are strong cultural and social messages involved in suppressing or expressing those emotions. In Japanese culture, and to a lesser extent British culture, great value is placed on not revealing emotions, thereby demonstrating the desired characteristics of self-control (Morris 2002). In cultures characterised by more mobility of expression, such as the North American or Australian cultures, facial immobility is a clue to high-status individuals, whose behaviour contrasts with that of others, who have more plasticity in their expressions (traditionally, this was the case with individuals accorded lower status, such as children, slaves and women). High-status people thus rarely smile, but are smiled at by lower-status people or subordinates; their voices tend to be pitched lower, while those of their subordinates are pitched higher; they are looked at by but rarely look at their subordinates; and touch, but are rarely touched by, their subordinates (Henley 1986, 2002). There may be some relationship between these behaviours and those, first noted by Darwin, of apes in the wild: in a confrontation, the loser tends to smile, to propitiate or appease the winner (Darwin 2002 [1872]).

In the human world, of course, smiling does not necessarily signify submission, although it can. Smiling in many situations is a positive and spontaneous response. In the workplace, however, there is increasing pressure on staff to smile at customers and clients, whether or not they like those customers or clients. Hochschild (2003) calls this 'emotional labour', observing that in modern post-industrial economies, where the service sector predominates, such labour can be exhausting and stressful unless managed with regard to the dignity and stress levels of the workers involved.

A rigid or expressionless face is sometimes known as a 'poker face', after the card game that favours players with the ability to conceal their responses to the cards they are dealt. The capacity

to void the face of telltale expression, to shut down any form of emotional leakage, can also be useful in situations involving negotiation, but in the long term such emotional suppression can lead to serious stress (Navarro 2011).



Facial expressions are an important aspect of nonverbal communication and can vary between cultures.

Eyes

Eyes, the 'portals of the soul', communicate fundamental messages, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. There are numerous messages in western culture relating to eye contact.

'Look me in the eye and say that!'
'It's rude to stare.'
'You can't hide your lyin' eyes.'

Eye contact, or direct gaze, means different things to different people. Euro-American, Saudi Arabian, Korean and Thai people tend to regard a direct gaze as a desirable characteristic indicating openness and honesty. Conversely, an averted gaze can be construed as suggesting dishonesty or shiftiness. In other cultures, however, such as Japanese, Mexican, West African and Puerto Rican, direct eye contact may be considered rude, while an averted gaze indicates respect (Morris 2002). There is obvious potential for misunderstanding here.

Gaze behaviour may also be linked to 'love at first sight', although Fisher takes a somewhat unromantic view of this phenomenon:

Could this human ability to adore one another within moments of meeting come out of nature? I think it does. In fact, love at first sight may have a critical adaptive function among animals. During the mating season, a female squirrel, for example, needs to breed. It is not to her advantage to copulate with a porcupine. But if she sees a healthy squirrel, she should waste no time. She should size him up. And if he looks suitable, she should grab her chance to copulate. Perhaps love at first sight is no more than an inborn tendency in many creatures that evolved to spur the mating process. Then among our human ancestors, what had been animal attraction evolved into the human sensation of infatuation at a glance. (Fisher 1992, p. 51)

In many cultures, direct eye contact is the preserve of dominant individuals, while subordinates tend to avert their gaze and blink more frequently. In western groups eye contact is used to regulate conversation: a person who is speaking in a group may break eye contact with others while talking, refocusing on a person making 'bidding' signals only when ready to yield the floor (Argyle 1999). Similarly, listeners tend to look at speakers more than speakers look at listeners, but speakers will tend to re-establish eye contact at critical points while talking to seek reinforcement, feedback or approval from listeners; when each is looking at the other, a 'gaze window' is established (Bavalas, Coates & Johnson 2002).

In some cultures direct eye contact implies the listener is concentrating on what is being said, while in others (e.g. Japanese) concentration is indicated by an averted gaze, or closed or half-closed eyes (Axtell 1998). An apparently universal phenomenon is the 'eyebrow flash' – a lifting of the eyebrows when meeting or acknowledging someone (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2007).

When we are interested in something, our pupils dilate, or expand. Although this is something western behavioural scientists have discovered only in the past few decades, elsewhere it has been known for centuries: Chinese and Arab traders have always watched for telltale dilations to reveal the motivations of their opponents during negotiations. Wearing dark glasses is a common strategy among modern hagglers.

Voice: it ain't what you say, but the way that you say it

The quality of our voices can surprise us. If you hear an audio recording of yourself, or watch yourself on video, what you hear (and see) may not be what you expect, but it does give you real feedback on the way you actually behave and how you may come across to others. Any strangeness you might feel in this self-perception is caused by:

- the fact that your voice resonates through your skull before it reaches your ears, which makes it sound slightly different from what you hear on playback or what others hear

- the fact that, before the invention of film and video, no-one in history had access to a moving representation of themselves. A few could afford a portrait, and many had seen themselves in a mirror, but a mirror is a 180° distortion of how you actually appear: stand, for example, in front of a mirror with someone you know, and you will see that their reflection – while accurate as far as it goes – is not what you see when you look at them directly.

Paralinguistics

Paralinguistics: the properties of voices, separate from the words being spoken, that can convey meanings

The meaning of the words we use – the words that can be reproduced in text, for example – can be modified substantially by **paralinguistic** changes. These changes include differences in emphasis, volume, pitch, inflection, nasality and articulation. Paralanguage can also give indications of geographical origins and socioeconomic class.

Silence and interruption behaviour also tell us much about what is going on in communication between people. We can change the meaning of what we say substantially by emphasising certain words and de-emphasising others:

‘Who, *me*? Oh no – *never*.’

The *main* thing to be emphasized is that she was *nowhere near* the area when it happened.

Such emphases, sometimes shown in text by italics, can convey many meanings, including sarcasm, boredom, sexual suggestiveness or anger, or they may simply be a means of drawing attention to particular points or interpretations of word clusters.

The volume we use when we speak can indicate boldness, timidity, confidentiality or other states of mind. We will also change the volume according to the physical distance we are from others, and whether we are communicating in private or public settings. Voice volume can have significant cultural variations, as Hall notes:

Personal status modulates voice tone, however, even in the Arab society. The Saudi Arabian shows respect to his superior – to a Sheikh, say – by lowering his voice and mumbling. The affluent American may also be addressed in this fashion, making almost impossible an already difficult situation. Since in American culture one unconsciously ‘asks’ another to raise his voice by raising his own, the American speaks louder. This lowers the Arab’s tone more and increases the mumbles. This triggers a shouting response from the American – which cues the Arab into a frightened ‘I’m not being respectful enough’ tone well below audibility. (Hall 1977, p. 312)

We tend to pitch our voices higher when we are dealing with people we know (e.g. consider the change in pitch in most people’s voices when they pick up the phone, say ‘Hello’, and then recognise a friend). We may pitch our voice lower as a warning signal, or out of defensiveness, when speaking to people we don’t know, although we sometimes lower the pitch (along with the volume) when we wish to establish more intimate communication with someone we like (Guthrie 1976). Deception may be suggested in heightened pitch and in the use of non-word interjections (‘Ah’, ‘uhh’), repetitions (‘I, I, I mean I really ...’) and partial words (‘I rea- really liked it’). Generally, males pitch their voices lower than do females (Puts, Gaulin & Verdolini 2006). Female newsreaders may tend to pitch their voices lower than normal in order to sound more ‘credible’.

Voice inflection is related to pitch. Upward inflection, or rising tone, is used conventionally when we ask questions: we are trying to cue a response. We may upwardly inflect or downwardly inflect when we are ready to stop talking and yield the floor to another person. This cue is often accompanied by eye contact. Continual high-rising tone tends to be associated with immaturity, lack of confidence or tentativeness: Crystal (1992) notes that Australian television programs such as *Neighbours* have had such

influence in Britain that a high-rising tone – often used by Neighbours characters – is starting to be used in Britain as a tentativeness signal (see online chapter ‘Gender and communication’).

Nasality has negative connotations and tends to be inversely correlated with perceptions of persuasiveness. This can work to the detriment of females, who tend to have more nasal voices than males (Bloom, Zajac & Titus 1999).

Careful or exaggerated articulation can indicate confidence, overconfidence, precision, formality, pretentiousness or over-punctiliousness. Poor articulation or lack of articulation can indicate shyness, lack of confidence or sloppiness.

Accents, often in combination with vocabulary, can reveal where a person comes from geographically, and can also reveal socioeconomic status.

Interruptions can reveal interesting patterns of power and dominance or submission, and may also reflect on gender roles and listening behaviour – for example, men are more likely to interrupt women than vice-versa (Schefflen 1972; Dunbar & Burgoon 2005).

Silence can sometimes be more important than sound or words. Silence during conversation can mean many things, including:

- punctuating or drawing attention to certain words or ideas
- evaluating and judging another’s words or behaviour; showing favour or disfavour, agreement or disagreement; attacking or ‘freezing out’ someone (e.g. not responding to a comment or greeting)
- disgust, sadness, fear, anger or love (Knapp and Hall 2010).

Bell suggests that silence can often be more effective than words for salespeople:

When asking for a decision, let silence fall after you’ve made your proposal. Don’t weaken your position by tag-on comments and compromising chat. Successful salespeople live by the credo that, after they give the price of the item, the ‘next one who speaks loses’. (Bell 1999, p. 166)

Paralinguistic behaviour may be influenced by the relative richness in the vocabulary of a language – we may compensate for the shortcomings of one channel by the strengths of another. Physically expressive people tend to rely more on paralinguistic behaviour, while people who are less physically demonstrative rely more on linguistic expression, as Poyatos has observed:

peoples who are more expressive kinesically, like Latins, Arabs or Mediterraneans in general, tend to use paralinguistic imitations in situations in which, for instance, we see English speakers utilize with great precision a legitimate onomatopoeic verb or noun from the particularly rich repertoire of their native tongue...When once at the beginning of my life in North America, I tried to explain to mechanics what happened to my car by imitating the sound it made, they would just say: ‘You mean it whirs?’ or ‘It clatters?’ (Poyatos 2002, p. 186)

Smell

Smell, too, is a form of nonverbal communication. Smell or olfactory communication is a major mode of communication in the animal world, and it would be surprising if there were not at least some residual manifestations in human communication (Hickson & Stacks 2004). Chemicals known as pheromones appear to be key signals in sexual behaviour, although the exact workings of such communication in humans is still not



Pheromones are sometimes expressed through perspiration. Do you think that sweat is sexy?

well understood (Wyatt 2003; Thornhill & Gangestad 1999). Pheromones are sometimes expressed through perspiration. Sweaty is sexy? In some circumstances, yes, but we must remember that the cultural inventions of the past few thousand years include clothes and artificial indoor environments (not to mention perfume and plumbing). There is evidence in some cultures of courting rituals in which young males wear handkerchiefs in their arm-pits during a dance, then take out the handkerchief and waft it beneath the noses of female admirers (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 2007).

In western societies, smell is virtually a taboo topic, because it is bound up with norms of cleanliness, health and attractiveness. Even those close to us may therefore be loath to let us know when we violate these norms ('even your best friends won't tell you'). Because it is often difficult to get feedback on our own body smell, many of us are persuaded to assume the worst and take corrective action. It should be noted that not all cultures share such norms. In some societies, perfumes and deodorants are frowned on because they mask the natural odours of the body, which are seen as sending messages about moods and states of mind. For similar reasons, some people prefer to smell the breath of the person they are talking to (Hall 1976).

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: THE POETS PRE-EMPT THE SCIENTISTS

Nonverbal communication is a relatively recent area of scientific study, yet writers have for centuries recognised its importance. Gesture and other aspects of nonverbal communication reveal much of our inner motivations without writers having to spell out those motivations (Portch 1985; Korte 1997; Hazard 2000). Here are some literary samples:

Fie, fie upon her!
There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.

Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida* IV, v (1601)

Estella, pausing a moment in her knitting with her eyes upon me, and then going on, I fancied that I read in the action of her fingers, as plainly as if she had told me in the dumb alphabet, that she perceived I had discovered my real benefactor ...

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861)

The features of our face are hardly more than gestures which have become permanent.

Marcel Proust, *Within a Budding Grove, Remembrance of Things Past* (1919)

In her office, (Phoebe) sat at her desk, an imposing piece of ebony about a tennis-court wide. Her desk chair built up her height; wing chairs in front put visitors a foot below her head. I opted for one of the corner couches behind the desk. She swivelled and glared, angry at losing her barricade ...

She pounded her right thigh in frustration ... Phoebe frowned ferociously, her jaw jutting out far enough to cause permanent damage to her overbite ... Her skin turned so pale that her freckles stood out like drops of blood against her skin ... Tish was still planted at her computer as I came in. She shot me a resentful glance but closed her file and folded her hands with the exaggerated patience of one who has little.

Sarah Paretsky, *Tunnel Vision* (1994)

ASSESS YOURSELF

Research other examples of writers using nonverbal communication to describe characters and situations in novels, stories, poetry, plays, films and television programs.

Gesture

Gestures are movements of the body, especially the hands or arms, that express an idea or emotion. Again, there is considerable cultural variation in the repertoire, frequency and expressive range of gestures – some cultures are physically more expressive, while others are more subdued (Morris 2002; Kendon 2005; Hostetter & Alibali 2007).

Gestures are shorthand ways of communicating a whole range of states of mind or ideas, such as:

- *Insecurity.* When children are stressed they will often suck a thumb, which may conjure up for them the security they felt when being suckled on a real or artificial nipple. Later in life, adults may show insecurity by biting a pencil, the arm of their glasses or their fingernails, which may perform the same function. A person entering an open area may perform the barrier cross gesture, which entails crossing the body in some way (scratching, touching the body or other hand, or moving an object from one hand to the other). Self-touching, hair-stroking, playing with jewellery are other signs of insecurity.
- *Deceit.* When lying, people can show stress in many different ways, including scratching or rubbing the face or nose, covering the mouth with a hand, manipulating clothing (buttoning up a coat or blouse, tugging at a collar); erecting 'signal blunders' to hide behind, such as a purse, briefcase, folder or laptop computer; crossing and uncrossing legs.
- *Apathy.* Shrugging the shoulders, restricting movement and gestures, hands in pockets
- *Disapproval.* Picking off lint from clothing, moving items away, refusing eye contact, lowering voice
- *Approval.* Thumbs up, 'A-OK' finger gestures, 'you're the man' finger pointing, high-fives
- *Confidence.* Hands on hips, thumbs in belt or pockets, swaggering gait, erect posture
- *Arrogance.* Steepling hands (putting fingertips of two hands together in the shape of a church steeple), feet up on desk, dismissive waving
- *Despair.* Hand wringing, head in hands, head shaking
- *Hostility.* Bunched fists, waving fists, pointing fingers, obscene or taboo gestures
- *Courtship and affection.* People who are romantically interested in one another may engage in 'grooming' behaviour, which entails subtly adjusting one's appearance so that one looks better – adjusting and smoothing down clothing (ties, collars) and glasses, touching the hair, adornments or jewellery. In modern workplaces, suggest Knapp and Hall (2010), it may be necessary to train males and females in 'decourting' behaviour to shut down courting signals, so that potentially messy sexual entanglements and sexual harassment situations are less likely to occur.

Gestures are powerful tools of communication. When in conversation we rephrase others' words, we may find that we are also 'rephrasing' their gestures (Tabensky 2002).

Cultural variations on gestures are as great as in other aspects of nonverbal communication. Where a Vietnamese man might intend to send signals of respect by gazing directly and folding his arms across his chest, a North American might read the attitude as indicating defiance rather than respect. A perfectly innocent gesture in one culture can be profoundly insulting in another.

Posture

Posture relates to body movements and to height. Height, or tallness, still carries powerful messages of dominance. There is some evidence of height being positively correlated with success in leadership positions (Knapp & Hall 2010). Just as people are often unhappy with their overall body image, some are unhappy with their height and may try to compensate (very tall people may stoop, while short people may hold their bodies more erect to appear taller). To lower the body towards someone else – as in a shallow or deep bow – is

Mirroring: consciously or unconsciously copying the nonverbal behaviour of someone admired

a universal sign of respect and sometimes even defeat. Aggression can be shown by a rigid body, with shoulders raised, both signals of readiness for physical combat. Defeat or depression are indicated by a slumped posture, representing both humility and retreat to the helplessness but recalled security of the foetus.

Admiration for another person can be manifested in a postural echo, or a **mirroring** of the admired person's posture. Indeed, other aspects of the admired person's nonverbal communication, such as gestural and vocal patterns, may also be knowingly or unknowingly copied. You can create empathy with another person by mirroring, but you can also create disquiet and even anger if the person perceives that you are mimicking or attempting to manipulate them. Mimicry, or the 'chameleon effect', may have evolved as a mechanism in early human groups to increase affiliation and build relationships with others (Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng & Chartrand 2003).

Body movement

Kinesics: the study of nonlinguistic body movement in relation to communication

The study of nonlinguistic body movement, or **kinesics**, is concerned with the way humans move their bodies in relation to communication. This involves processes such as *orientation* and *synchronisation*.

Orientation, or the attitude, inclination or body angle we adopt in relation to others, can send powerful nonverbal messages. If we are interested in someone, we tend to face him or her squarely. The less interested we are, whether through hostility or indifference, the more we tend to orientate ourselves away from the person. When males and females are in confined situations – for example, when brushing past each other – males will tend to face towards females, while females will tend to face away (Schefflen 1972).

Synchronisation, similar to postural echo, mirroring or mimicking is an interactive process that helps define relationships between individuals: the greater the rapport between them, the greater their synchronisation. It plays a critical part in courting rituals, and is in fact a form of dance, wherein females may be testing males for compatibility. Synchronisation is an important part of animal mating rituals (Remland 2000). Some synchronisation researchers have concluded that 'men typically don't realize that they are even involved in a courtship dance, or that they are typically very poor dancers' (Grammer, Kruck & Magnusson 1998, p. 23). Interpersonal conflicts can ensue when individuals are out of synchrony with one another – physically bumping into each other may sometimes be the nonverbal equivalent of verbal misunderstanding.

Touching

Haptics: the study of touch as a form of communication

The study of touch, or **haptics**, reveals much about human behaviour. It links gesture, posture and territory, or personal space. Touch is recognised as a basic human need, but the degree to which individuals touch one another varies considerably from culture to culture, as well as within cultures. Touch is critically allied to sensory integration and perhaps even psychological wellbeing: we probably need some degree of touching to survive and thrive, but for a variety of reasons we may not get enough of it (Field 2002). For example, displays of maternal warmth (touching, gaze) towards children may make those children develop a greater sense of internal control – that is, feelings that they can influence their surroundings and destiny, rather than feel powerless (Carton & Carton 1998). The touching involved in the grooming rituals of our prehuman ancestors may have been instrumental in developing conversation (in particular, gossip) and language (Dunbar 1998).

Touch can be usefully classified into five types (Johnson 1998):

1. Functional/professional
2. Social/polite

3. Friendship/warmth
4. Love/intimacy
5. Sexual/arousal.

In workplaces, most touching is of type 1 or type 2. Professional touchers include doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, masseurs, manicurists, hairdressers, dentists, priests and – occasionally – politicians. While there are strong taboos on various types of touching in different cultures, some people unconsciously or consciously feel deprived of types 2, 3, 4 and 5, and thus may seek out type 1 interactions at work (Montagu 1986). Professionals should not feel uneasy about this, as they are almost certainly performing a vital social-therapeutic role with some customers. Therapeutic touch from nurses in nursing homes has been associated with decreases in pain, increases in haemoglobin levels, decreases in sensory deprivation, increases in reality orientation and ‘almost instantaneous calm’ in aged persons (Simington 1993).

When cultural taboos on touching are strong – for example, male–male touching in Australia or England – then some may try to compensate by seeking touch through sporting rituals, immersion in crowds or violence (Kneidinger, Maple & Tross 2001; Canetti 2000 [1960]).

Perhaps the most common form of professional touching is the handshake. Darwin speculated that the handshake is in fact a ‘relic gesture’, an echo of a time when two men meeting for the first time would grasp each other’s right forearm to prevent swords being drawn (2002 [1872]). The ritual is thus bound up with male dominance and may indicate that the initiator of the gesture is on home territory. (This may also help to explain the deeply rooted ambivalence towards left-handed people prevalent in some cultures.)

The western habit of shaking hands has been broadly adopted internationally, but any more demonstrative gesture – embracing or kissing, for example – needs to be approached with caution. High-contact cultures include Arab peoples, Latin Americans, Russians, most South-East Asians and southern Europeans. Low-contact cultures include people of Anglo-Saxon origin, Scandinavians, Japanese, Koreans and Chinese (Hall 1977).

Clothing and adornment

Clothes and bodily adornment are used primarily to protect us from the elements and to send social and sexual messages. ‘Adornment’ in this sense includes both physical decoration (hair styling, make-up, jewellery, wigs, suntans, shaving/not shaving, tattoos, body piercing) and body modification (plastic surgery, foot-binding), all social inventions by different cultures whose broad purpose is to emit messages of attractiveness, submission or dominance.

The ways we dress and adorn ourselves tell others whether we belong to a particular group, or which group or high-status individual we imitate out of admiration; they also carry messages about wealth, rank or class. Some clothing has a primarily functional purpose – say, to protect the wearer (e.g. a welder’s gloves, apron and goggles; a mechanic’s overalls; a diver’s suit; underwear) or to protect the environment from the wearer (e.g. clean-room uniforms in computer chip manufacture; a surgeon’s gown and gloves; cellophane gloves, hair covering and apron worn by delicatessen assistant). In other cases, clothing and adornment send nonverbal messages by performing functions such as:

- *an indication of sexual modesty or purity*: a nun’s habit; concealing clothing (high necks and low hemlines); veils, burkas, chadors, hijabs (Killian 2003; McLarney 2009)
- *a display of sexual immodesty*: codpieces, figure-hugging or revealing clothing (low necks and high hemlines); transparent materials

- *an indication of leisurely life (without need to work)*: delicate, light-coloured fabrics; long fingernails; suntan; tracksuits; sunglasses
- *a display of group identification*: uniforms; common clothing styles or bodily adornments; judges' gowns and wigs; sporting team insignia
- *a display of wealth/status*: brand-name clothes, jewellery; accessories; rank insignia
- *displays of dominance/threat/physical toughness*: shoulder pads, body piercing, tattoos, leather clothing, tight clothing, sunglasses, heavy boots, chewing gum, smoking
- *displays of compensation*: elevator/platform shoes, hair transplants, cosmetic surgery
- *displays of religious affiliation*: yarmulkes, crosses, clerical collars, turbans, beards.

Uniforms and nonuniforms

Some organisations require employees to wear a specific uniform, while in others uniforms are perceived as 'too military'. In those organisations that require uniforms to be worn, the shared identity they provide can lead to a more positive emotional response in customers and clients. Uniforms often convey powerful status and sex-role messages, too; as it is females and lower-status males who are most often required to wear uniforms, such dress codes may signal enforced conformity in less powerful people.

Of course, if we define the term more broadly, high-status people also often wear 'uniform': powerful dynamics of conformity ensure that executives dress and adorn themselves in narrowly prescribed ways (e.g. the traditional business suit). In this sense, well-paid executives wear uniforms just as surely as uniformed service staff in organisations or members of a street gang: they are all conforming to powerful norms, the violation of which will attract disapproval within the group.

Dressing down, dressing up

Some interesting debate on the question of uniform has emerged in the past few years. It has been traditional in the United States for schoolchildren not to wear uniforms, but there are now increasing demands for uniforms to be worn. Positions on the issue tend to gravitate to freedom of expression on the one hand and, on the other, to the perceived advantages of cheaper clothing (and less wealth display), the desirability of shutting down sexual and courting signals so that students can concentrate on their work, and the discouragement of too much individuality or too great a challenge to social norms (Remland 2000).

A similar debate is occurring in many workplaces, with the advent of 'dress-down Friday' or 'pre-weekend casual' initiatives, which allow many staff to avoid business dress for at least one day of the week. As with the school uniform debate, the arguments centre on issues of self-expression, freedom from conformity and a more relaxed work environment versus questions of whether 'casual clothes mean casual attitudes' and how such nonconformity affects the organisation's image of professionalism (McPherson 1997; Smith 1998; 'US companies averse to "dress down" Friday' 1995). Further debate rages about the acceptability of body adornment such as tattoos and body piercing (Smith 2003). There may be a correlation between the tendency of an individual to undergo tattooing and body piercing and the tendencies of that individual towards high levels of anxiety, self-mutilation, dysfunctional or violent social behaviour, suicide and risk-taking (Carroll, Riffenburgh, Roberts & Myhre 2002).

Fashionable dress, body piercing – for that matter most clothing and adornment phenomena – can be broadly seen as parts of a uniform. Indeed, all fashion can be seen as the ongoing creation and adaptation of uniforms for us all (Barnard 2001; Crane 2001). In counselling teenagers (a group that could well resist the idea of wearing business suits, in male or female versions) on survival in the real world, Brain has this to say: 'Many people ask, "But why? Why have people chosen this ridiculous outfit as the outward symbol of

success, goals and intentions? It is expensive, cumbersome and absolutely worthless in any sort of inclement weather. Why? What possible purpose does a tie serve, for example?" The answer is simply BECAUSE. It is completely random. It makes no sense. But that is how it is. You can accept it and take advantage of the effect suits have, or you can reject it. By accepting it, you tend to accelerate your development' (Brain 1997, p. 34).

Personal space/territoriality

Proxemics: the study of the spatial relationships between individuals

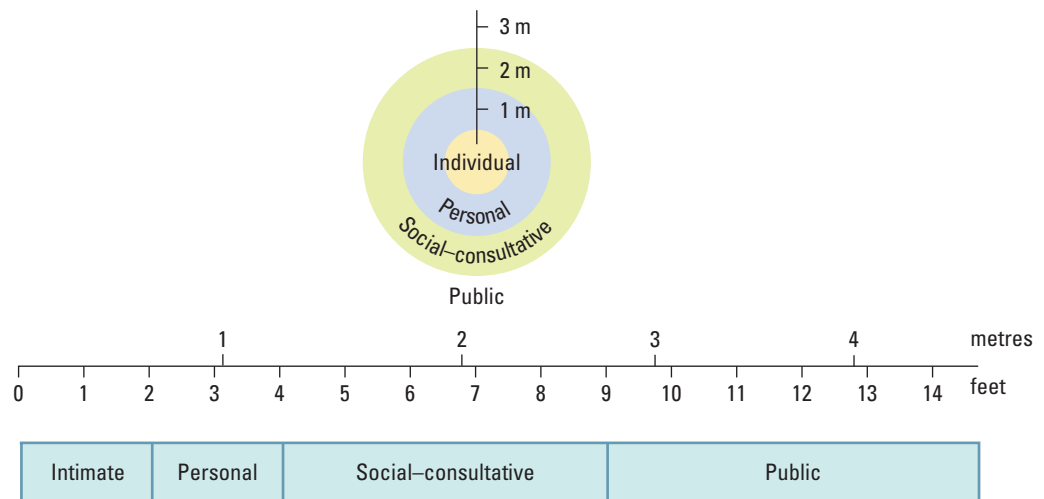
Proxemics is the study of personal space or territoriality, or the way we create and cross spaces between ourselves and others.

Like animals, human beings exist within an invisible 'bubble' of personal space or territory, where we feel secure. We tend to feel anxious if others invade this space; for example, by standing too close or by touching us. Figure 8.2 illustrates this phenomenon. The four zones identified are:

1. *the intimate*. Within this zone we will be comfortable only with people we like and know very well – for example, family members and lovers.
2. *the personal*. Within this zone we will also be comfortable with people we know quite well – for example, friends and close colleagues.
3. *the social-consultative*. Within this zone we will also be comfortable with people we know only moderately well – for example, work colleagues in a meeting.
4. *the public*. Within this zone we will also be comfortable with people we know only slightly or not at all – for example, people in public places.

FIGURE 8.2 Personal space zones for a middle-class North American of northern European heritage

Source: Adapted from Hall (1966).



Note, however, that this personal space bubble is relevant only to a middle-class North American of northern European heritage. Personal space varies between cultures and classes, and even between the sexes. For example, researchers have reached the following conclusions:

- Many males demand more personal space than many females.
- People from rural areas may have higher personal space needs than people from city areas.
- Intercultural conflict can arise if norms about space and touch are not understood. For example, if a British negotiator (high space needs, low touch norms) meets a Saudi Arabian negotiator (low space needs, high touch norms), the Saudi may advance 'into' the British person's zone, and that person may step back; the Saudi may perceive this as coldness, or as a meaningless accident, and step forward again...and so on (Morris 2002; Pease & Pease 2006).

Personal space, unsurprisingly, is related to touching behaviour. People with lower space needs are more likely to use touch as a normal mode of communication; people with higher space needs are likely to practise social touching less. Having said this, it is often true that high-power, high-prestige people – who are rarely closely approached or touched by subordinates – will often assert their power by invading the personal space of subordinates and by touching them (Henley 1986).



Personal space needs may not be met when people are forced into close proximity, such as when business colleagues share a lift with a superior.

Personal space can be communicated by such means as a jacket left over a chair back, a cup left on a table, photographs and other personal items left on a desk, bumper stickers on cars ('Not so close – I hardly know you') or, more overtly, a 'Private' sign on a door. In extreme cases, violence may result from space violations in human encounters, but we are more likely to express anxiety and erect barriers in subtle, nonverbal ways – face rubbing, breaking eye contact, making the face expressionless, turning away, surrounding ourselves with objects, and so on. This happens when we are forced into close proximity in busy stores, in elevators, on public transport, at sporting events and in similar public situations. Road rage and parking rage may also be connected to territorial behaviour (Remland 2000).

Personal space can interact with orientation in interesting ways. Standing opposite someone can reinforce the idea that you are 'in opposition': meetings, negotiations and brainstorming can perhaps be facilitated if different parties sit side by side rather than face to face. Any controversy about who occupies a 'power seat' – for example, at the head of the table – is thus avoided. North American and North Vietnamese negotiators meeting in Paris in 1968 to negotiate an end to the Vietnam War spent several weeks arguing over the shape of the table before the two sides got down to more substantive matters (see 'Please be seated: chairs, tables and the curious habits of human beings' in chapter 19).

Environment

The physical environment in which we find ourselves can itself be a powerful mode of communication. As Winston Churchill said, 'We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us'. A North American football coach understood the value of manipulating the environment to maximise his team's performance: at half-time players would rest in blue-painted rooms, but the coach would give his last-minute pep-talks in a smaller room painted in bright colours. The British Labour politician Aneurin Bevan observed that party conferences held in cheerful, bright-coloured rooms were significantly more successful than those held in dingy, depressing rooms. Building architecture, room size and shape, furniture, interior decoration and climate can all communicate strong messages to those who use or visit them.

Time and cultural context

Time and cultural context can also help us to understand nonverbal communication. The study of time use as a form of communication is called **chronemics** (Ballard & Seibold 2006; Turner & Reinsch 2007). Anthropologist Edward T Hall has made a useful distinction between 'high context' and 'low context' cultures. The high-context/low-context model incorporates variables such as chronemics (or the study of time use behaviour), the degree of sensory

Chronemics: the study of time use behaviour in relation to communication

involvement in a situation, the nature of messages sent and how they are sent or concealed in a given situation, and the extent to which identity is formed by affinity with individuals or groups. The context model thus has implications for intercultural communication and intra- and inter-group communication. The chief differences are shown in table 8.2.

TABLE 8.2 High context and low context cultures

	High context	Low context
Identification	Group	Individual
Sensory involvement	High (low personal space needs, high-contact touch behaviour)	Low (high personal space needs, low-contact touch behaviour)
Messages	Implicit: embedded in social context: ritual, personal relationships, personal word as guarantee	Explicit: words carry most information (emphasis on legal documents etc.)
Time sense/chronicity	Polychronic: multiple times. Time is circular. Events proceed at their own pace. Multiple events occur simultaneously (e.g. different people in room working on different tasks)	Monochronic. One time only. Time is linear. Events happen sequentially. Punctuality, scheduling, planning very important

Source: Adapted from Hall (1977).

As Hall (1977) explains:

In some cultures, messages are explicit; the words carry most of the information. In other cultures, such as China or Japan or the Arab cultures, less information is contained in the verbal part of the message, since more is in the context. That's why American businessmen often complain that their Japanese counterparts never get to the point. The Japanese wouldn't dream of spelling the whole thing out... in general, high-context people can get by with less of the legal paperwork that is deemed essential in America. A man's word is his bond, and you need not spell out the details to make him behave...

The German-Swiss are low-context, falling somewhere near the bottom of the scale. Next, the Germans, then the Scandinavians, as we move up. These cultures are all lower in context than the U.S. Above the Americans come the French, the English, the Italians, the Spanish, the Greeks, and the Arabs. In other words, as you move from Northern to Southern Europe, you will find that people move towards more involvement with each other. (p. 4)

Thus, for example, a German businessman trying to negotiate with a Latin American may not understand why the other person does not ascribe to the same sense of urgency to matters as he has (or indeed why there are other people in the room at the same time, apparently transacting other business). The differences between them are thus not purely a matter of language, but of culture; in particular, they experience quite different senses of time, or chronicity.

People from low-context cultures who want to understand high-context cultures probably need go no further than to talk to their grandparents or to relatives and friends living in country areas. Cultures that are low context now were once quite different: traditionally these communities were more oriented towards groups such as the family, the neighbourhood, the local church; the pace of life was more relaxed and commercial agreements were often based on verbal understandings – that is, they were (apart from factors relating to territorial and touching behaviour) classic high-context cultures. 'Low context'

here is almost a code for ‘modern urban’, and even rural areas of low-context cultures tend to be relatively high-context in a number of ways.

Examples of new insights into context and chronemics are:

- It may be useful to distinguish between *monochrons* (people who prefer work to be structured in linear flows, with a minimum of interruptions) and *polychrons* (people who are happy to work on multiple projects at the same time and who don’t get thrown by interruptions).
 - Women may be more polychronic than men.
 - Monochronic behaviour may be linked to stress-prone Type A behaviour.
 - Vietnamese migrants to the United States may be more encouraged to use North American hospitals if a no-appointment, drop-in time zone is set up and if family members are encouraged to attend consultations.
 - Chinese managers may make remarkably limited direct use of low-context tools, such as computer-based information systems, and western managers may need to bear this in mind.
 - Within broad ethnic groupings, such as ‘Asians’, there may be significant variations: for example, Koreans may be considerably more low-context than Japanese.
 - Southern European polychrons are under pressure to conform to Northern European mono-chronic time usage.
- (Hall 1977; Houston 2002; Kaufman-Scarborough & Lindquist 1999; Martinsons & Westwood 1997; Frei, Racicot & Travagline 1999; Thomas 1998; Cunha & Cunha 2004)

Nonverbal applications A: applying the model

Figure 8.1 presented a model of nonverbal communication. Now let’s try to apply that model to understanding different situations we might find ourselves in. We will ignore the physiological constant of body structure and use the remaining categories to analyse five behavioural states: respect, liking, hostility, distress and deceit. The brief analysis given in table 8.3 cannot, of course, hope to capture the full complexity of an individual’s nonverbal behaviour, and its cultural bias is primarily Euro-American. Nevertheless, you may find it useful to analyse situations you have experienced and will find yourself in. Remember not to jump to conclusions with nonverbal communication: a gesture or posture or other manifestation in isolation may mean nothing. Groups or clusters of behaviours or tells may build up a more predictable picture. If, for example, you find yourself dealing with an individual exhibiting virtually every behaviour in one column of the table, then you can be reasonably sure that you would need no further words to identify and confirm the operation of that unique behavioural state.

TABLE 8.3 Nonverbal characteristics of five behavioural states

Expression	Emotion				
	Respect	Liking	Hostility	Distress	Deceit
Head movements	■ Head bow	■ Rapid nodding ■ Tilt	■ Jaw thrust forward ■ Tilt ■ Shaking of head (in disapproval)	■ Shaking of head (despair)	■ Nodding when saying ‘no’, shaking when saying ‘yes’

(continued)

TABLE 8.3 (continued)

Expression	Emotion				
	Respect	Liking	Hostility	Distress	Deceit
Facial expression	- Open expression - Mild smile	- Smiling - Moistening lips	- Scowling - Glaring - Bared teeth - Clenched teeth	- Anguished expression - Rapid swallowing - Rapid biting, wetting of lips	Asymmetrical expression
Eyes	Averted gaze	- Pupil dilation - Wide - Narrowing	- Narrowing - Glaring - Rolling in disgust - Averted gaze	- Rapid blinking - Darting - Downcast gaze	- Rapid blinking - Pupil dilation - Averted gaze
Voice	- Deferential tone - Silence	- Higher pitch - Deeper pitch - Warmer tone	- Deeper pitch - Loud	- Shaking voice - Non-words, repetitions, partial words - Stumbling over words - Higher pitch - Sighs often	- Shaking voice - Non-words, repetitions, partial words - Stumbling over words - Higher pitch
Gesture	Palms out	- Grooming, preening - Mirroring	- Shaking fist - Obscene gestures - Crossed arms - Hands on hips - Pointing finger - Picking lint from own clothing	- Hands around mouth - Wringing hands - Jiggling legs - Feet turned in - Crossed arms - Fidgeting with adornments	- Scratching - Finger under collar - Rapid crossing of legs
Posture	- Bow - Standing at attention	- Relaxed - Mirroring	- Rigid - Shoulders raised	- Slumped over - Rocking body	Nothing noticeable
Body movement	- Sometimes oriented away - Synchronised	- Oriented towards - Synchronised	- Oriented away in disgust - Oriented towards in confrontation - Unsynchronised	- Oriented away - Unsynchronised	- Oriented away - Nothing noticeable
Touching	- Touching clothing, feet, hands - Allowing oneself to be touched	- Handshake - Hand-holding - Caress - Patting - Embrace - Kiss	- Push - Elbow - Punch - Kick	- Hand-holding - Self-touching	- Nothing noticeable - Feigned liking gestures
Clothing and adornment	Imitation	- Imitation - Sexually revealing	- Rank display - Wealth display	Disorganised, ungroomed	Uncharacteristic clothing, display
Territoriality/ personal space	- Maintain distance - Patient waiting (queues)	Come closer	- Keep distance (disgust) - Invasive approach (aggression)	- Keep distance (shame) - Invasive approach (seeking solace)	- Nothing noticeable - Feigned liking gestures

Expression	Emotion				
	Respect	Liking	Hostility	Distress	Deceit
Environment	■ Subdued colours ■ Lack of noise	■ Warm colours ■ Quiet ■ Soft furnishings ■ Attention to physical needs (food, drink)	■ Harsh colours ■ Noise ■ Uncomfortable furnishings ■ Lack of attention to physical needs	■ Disorganisation, untidiness	■ Nothing noticeable
Time and cultural context	■ Observing local chronicity patterns ■ Matching time-use style to that of others	■ Observing local chronicity patterns ■ Generosity with time ■ Matching time-use style to that of others	■ Ignoring local chronicity patterns ■ Being late ■ Making people wait ■ Stinginess with time ■ Forcing others to adopt alien time style	■ Confusion about local chronicity patterns ■ Lateness ■ Procrastination ■ 'Hurry sickness'	■ Nothing noticeable

Nonverbal applications B: becoming less dyssemic

Dyssemia: the condition of having difficulties in understanding or sending nonverbal information

According to Nowicki and Duke (2002), many people have difficulty fitting into social and professional situations because they are in fact '**dyssemic**'— that is, they experience difficulties in understanding or sending nonverbal information.

Dyssemic people, they suggest, tend to behave inappropriately in social situations. For example, they may:

- avoid eye contact when walking past people
- stare excessively at others
- stand too close to people when interacting
- spread their materials beyond their personal area when working
- speak in a monotone
- fail to alter their speech volume to suit the situation they are in
- maintain an expressionless face when discussing emotional topics
- not smile back when smiled at
- not care about their clothing or grooming
- persevere in actions or comments regardless of their adverse impact
- not check their appearance in mirrors or window reflections
- start talking before others have finished
- not listen to what others say
- arrive late for meetings
- finish eating long before or long after others (Nowicki & Duke 2002).

Exhibiting one or two of these behaviour patterns is unlikely to present overwhelming problems, but more than this may indicate that such individuals are socially 'out of synch' (Kranowitz & Silver 1998). If they were to study nonverbal communication in some depth and then try to apply what they have learned, such dyssemic people might find they fit in better with those around them, and experience fewer communication breakdowns, misunderstandings and conflicts (Wocadlo & Rieger 2006).

SUMMARY

In this chapter we considered different aspects of nonverbal communication. Isolated non-verbal behaviours are not necessarily significant, but we may be able to make reasoned inferences about another person's behaviour or state of mind from consistent clusters of such behaviours. Nonverbal communication that is congruent with verbal communication suggests that the two channels of communication are reinforcing each other; where they are not congruent, we may be able to use that incongruence to make inferences about another person's behaviour and state of mind. Nonverbal communication and body language are not the same: body language is an element of nonverbal communication, but it has other aspects. We examined a visual model of nonverbal communication, looking at a number of (not mutually exclusive) categories, such as gesture, posture, body movement, touch, eye contact, paralinguistics, environment and time. We concluded that an understanding of the dynamics of nonverbal communication might offer us useful insights into our own behaviour.

KEY TERMS

backchanneling *p. 261*
chronemics *p. 271*
cluster *p. 256*
congruence *p. 257*
dyssemia *p. 275*
haptics *p. 267*

kinesics *p. 267*
mirroring *p. 267*
paralinguistics *p. 263*
proxemics *p. 270*
tell *p. 256*

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is a cluster, and why is it important for understanding nonverbal communication?
2. What is congruence, and why is it important for understanding nonverbal communication?
3. Define 'backchanneling'.
4. What is meant by a poker face?
5. What is the relationship between synchronisation and mirroring?
6. List and explain three types of nonverbal communication that might suggest a person is lying or being deceitful.
7. List three ways in which a person might assert dominance over others.
8. What is a monochron?

APPLIED ACTIVITIES

1. A friend of yours is about to give a presentation but has not spent much time on researching the content. 'I'm not too worried about facts – a friend told me that people give only about 7 per cent of their attention to any words you use. So I'm spending most of my time in front of a mirror, working on my gestures and delivery.' Write a brief (100-word) memo or email in response to your friend's strategy.
2. Use the recording function on a smartphone or hire/use a traditional video camera for this activity: Working by yourself or with a partner, record (at least ten minutes) of yourself talking, walking, sitting, gesturing. If you are working with a partner, return the favour. If this is difficult, perhaps you can get access to some home movie video footage of yourself. Observe yourself on screen: is the sound and the image what you

expected? If not, why not? Might your observations cause you to change the way you behave? If so, why? If not, why not?

3. Conduct a debate on the topic 'Everyone wears a uniform'.
4. Create a list of at least six other aspects of nonverbal communication that could be perceived to be examples of dyssemia.
5. Select one scene, or several pages of dialogue, from a play script or screenplay. Write two sets of stage directions, specifying two completely different sets of nonverbal communication. Discuss the result with a partner.
6. The federal government has hired your advertising agency to create a television, radio and print advertising campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to sensitise people to becoming more polite in public spaces. Write a television or radio script, or copy for a newspaper/magazine advertisement, trying to persuade people not to conduct loud conversations in public: on mobile or cell phones; in native or non-native languages; in foreign countries using languages not native to those countries.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?



Luis has transferred to your branch from the South American office, and is now manager of floor operations. He is strikingly handsome and tall, and is athletic in build. He moves quickly and has a deep, resonant voice. To make matters worse, as some of your male friends joke, he is both exceptionally intelligent and highly competent. He is also motivated and has excellent technical skills. You might expect, jokes aside, that many of the males in the building are envious of him.

He has a few personal habits, however, that are beginning to irritate people. He stands very close when talking, and when making a point he will often tap an index finger on the listener's forearm, irrespective of gender. His booming voice makes everyone turn around and look, which can embarrass the person he is talking to.

He often simply bursts into people's offices and will go around to their side of the desk, sit on the desk and look intently at them while he is talking. He is also in the habit of making mock bows to a number of the female staff. In talking with staff members about problems, he will sometimes put his arm around their shoulder – again, irrespective of gender – and gesture strongly with his other hand. Your personal assistant, Marie, who is finely tuned at the best of times, has just come into your office and said this to you: 'Look, I'm sure he's well-intentioned, and he has really kicked the productivity figures up, but unless he lays off the touchy-feely stuff, Jen and Lisa and I will make a sexual harassment claim against him!'

What should you do about the situation?

SUGGESTED READING

- Anderson, Peter A 2004, *The complete idiot's guide to understanding body language*, Alpha Books, New York.
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